



***Practising Open Education – Developing the Potential of
Open Educational Resources in Art, Design and Media***

**Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton
FOCUS GROUP REPORT**

Prepared by: Stephen Mallinder and Debbie Flint - Art Design Media-Higher Education
Academy Subject Centre (University of Brighton)

March 2011

Focus Group Report – Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton

1. Introduction

The *Practising Open Education Project* is part of the Academy-JISC funded UK Open Educational Resources (UK-OER) Programme (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/oer>) which seeks to investigate and embed the most effective pathways for the sustainable release, and use, of open educational resources (OERs) across a range of subject disciplines.

There are challenges to the development of open educational practice in the ‘creative’ disciplines of art, design and media. The pilot *Art Design Media-Open Educational Resources (ADM-OER) Project 2009-10* (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>) identified a number of salient themes: for example, individual, as well as institutional, identity plays a significant role in progressing OER policies and practices; the sector employs a considerable number of fractional staff, many of whom will teach across institutions and maintain another professional practice; as art, design and media production comprises the object of study, many resources contain essential third party-content. The project highlighted how dialogue with staff across the participating institutions offered opportunities to address these aspects.

Managed by the Art Design Media Higher Education Academy Subject Centre (ADM-HEA), and with six art, design and media departments as partners, the *Practising Open Education Project* (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/practicing-open-education-2013-developing-the-potential-of-open-educational-resources-in-art-design-and-media>) aims to build on the pilot phase by enabling departmental exploration of perceptions of OERs, motivations for, and barriers to, their development and use prior to the development of departmental strategies for each participating department.

The project seeks to negotiate change by engaging directly with staff and cascading the experiences, understandings and outputs of the *ADM-OER Project* to a wider range of art, design and media departments. By encouraging dialogue across the institutions – between students, information services, departmental managers and teaching staff – the project aims to identify key areas to be targeted in order to instigate processes that promote the creation and use of OERs.

2. Project Partners

- Leeds Trinity University College – Department of Media Film and Culture
- Bucks New University – School of Design, Craft and Visual Arts
- De Montfort University – Faculty of Art and Design
- Kingston University – Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture
- University of Southampton – Winchester School of Art
- University of Hertfordshire – School of Creative Arts

3. Project Aims and Objectives

- To generate department-specific understandings of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use.
- To further develop discipline-specific understandings of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use.
- To provide targeted support that addresses the specific needs, motivations and barriers at the participating departments.
- To embed effective OER practices and policies within the participating departments.
- To release a significant number of art, design and media resources for access, use and repurpose.

4. Focus Groups Aims

The Focus Group's objective was to bring together key stakeholders at each of the partner institutions in order to collect information about:

- Perceptions of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use
- Repository facilities in place
- Technical support
- Institutional support
- Resources with OER potential

The Project Management team's role is to report back findings from the Focus Group and offer recommendations as appropriate. This report will be sent to the project contact at each partner institution to inform the development of an OER **Action Plan**.

In addition, the Focus Groups offer an opportunity for ADM-HEA to inform the participants what experiences, outcomes and resources were collated from the pilot project and the types of support that are available to the project partners.

5. Focus Group Report Structure

The focus groups followed a series of set questions (see Appendix A: *Focus Group Questions*), which were designed to address the key aims. The summaries of the responses to the questions are available on a spreadsheet (Appendix B), which details the comments from all the six project focus groups.

However, the participants were encouraged to engage in open discussions and, as a result, the responses did contain a wide range of opinions and comments that address multiple OER-related topics.

The participants' responses were then collated under key themes:

- **Technology:** staff engagement with digital materials and platforms
- **Intellectual Property and Copyright**
- **Pedagogic Cultures and Practices**
- **Institutional Contexts:** profile, marketing and strategic support

Note: The themes are broad and not mutually exclusive but designed to draw together comments into appropriate contexts to facilitate analysis.

6. Focus Group Final Composition - Winchester School of Art (WSA)

Participants: 10 members of staff – teaching, information services (library), technical including EdShare, Teaching and Learning Enhancement Unit and Head of School.

Sub-disciplines represented – Fine Art, Design, Digital Media.

7. Valuable Resources

- WaSP – Web Standards Project (<http://www.webstandards.org/>)
- WaSP INTERACT – Web Standards Curriculum Framework (<http://interact.webstandards.org/curriculum/>)
- EdShare (<http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/>)
- VLE - Virtual Learning Environment
- Google
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Usenet (news groups)
- Library staff
- Swap Box (<http://www.swapboxproject.co.uk/>)
- Students, library and archives
- Ashmolean Museum (<http://www.ashmolean.org/>)
- VADS – Visual Arts Data Service (<http://www.vads.ac.uk/>)
- TED Talks (<http://www.ted.com/talks>)
- UBU Web (<http://ubu.com/>)

8. Technology

"[The VLE] is not dynamic enough ... the students [are] critical and staff are not embracing effectively."

"Anything I create goes into EdShare ... I've been uploading handouts, slides and video grabs."

“Why isn’t [the VLE] open?”

Staff attending the focus group had previous experience and knowledge of open educational practice through working with other similar OER schemes such as *EdShare* (<http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/>), *Swap Box* (<http://www.swapboxproject.co.uk/>) - and digitization projects *Look Here* – VADS (<http://www.vads.ac.uk/lookhere/>).

Also, EPrints (<http://www.eprints.org/>), an important open source software, was developed by the University of Southampton. There was a group view that the Practising Open Education project has the capacity to help develop the potential of e-Prints software.

Participants utilize a broad range of digital resources for teaching and learning purposes; communication tools such as blogs, discussion forums and news groups, and online repositories (TED, SwapBox, UbuWeb, VADS).

EdShare, the institution’s existing repository for learning and teaching materials, is an important facility for some staff within the institution.

The institution’s virtual learning environment (VLE) featured heavily in discussions. Although a key resource, participants suggested certain barriers to staff and student engagement that need to be addressed:

“[The VLE] is too passive ... it is too task driven and not sufficiently collaborative or discursive.”

“I tend to use [the VLE] as an archive of resources ... but why isn’t it ‘open’ even to all our students at WSA (Winchester School of Art).”

The WSA VLE is considered a repository but raised questions of ‘openness’ for the group. One participant believed the availability to course resources to all students could be problematic – it was suggested that a learning curve is broken if new students see final year materials. (See **10.3 Pedagogic Cultures and Practices**)

The issue of appropriate formats for open educational resources is a serious consideration; PDFs, for example, are not considered ‘repurposable’.

Participants spoke of the increasing prevalence of students developing their own digital ‘educational resources’, for example, using hand-held technology to record aspects of their learning experience.

9. Intellectual Property and Copyright

“Archive materials have potential commercial value – in particular design where manufacturers were willing to pay for older, more traditional, designs and go into production.”

“It needs to be unilateral disarmament [not be inhibited by concerns over copyright and IP] ... make enough materials available.”

“We want to share but there are concerns over intellectual property.”

Copyright and IP were discussed by the group in respect of archive materials which have potential commercial value – in particular design “where manufacturers were willing to pay for older, more traditional designs and go into production.”

Knowledge about, and attitudes to, copyright, IP issues and ensuing practice ranged from knowledgeable and unconstrained to uncertain.

“I always argue ‘Fair Use’ – we are using for educational purposes ... I track down rights but I’m not inhibited by that.”

“I may use in a lecture but I’m wary of making open access.”

One participant here presented ideas on how open educational practice should not be inhibited by overstating IP and copyright issues and the release of a wide range of materials should be encouraged:

“It’s matter of critical mass ... involving staff, [collating] enough resources, offering wide appeal ... something for everyone.”

Participants articulated a number of barriers to the development of open educational practice, predominantly the control of resources made available. These included concerns about attribution, intellectual property, and how resources would be used and re-used.

“There are challenges of attribution ... lack of attribution could be a demotivator. There needs to be a sense of ownership.”

“Misuse is a concern; how people may remix the resources.”

10. Pedagogic Cultures & Practices

“[Creating materials for open access and use] shows confidence.”

“Student will take shots, and video grabs, of my lecture slides on mobile phones.”

“I don’t see YouTube as a resource - I treat it more like TV.”

“[The VLE] is very strategic – to house core materials for specific modules.”

“Benefits for the students ... enrichment, discovery.”

10.1 Definitions and the role of OERs

Definitions of open educational resources were not discussed by this focus group. Their role was articulated in terms of developing teaching and research skills and also in enriching the experiences of teaching; in one instance the process of finding, identifying and repurposing resources was aligned with creativity:

“It’s fun to find resources have been used and remixed ... it’s fun to build on the work of others, it’s a creative activity”

“Sometimes when looking at a resource ... it’s not perfect so you build your own resource.”

One participant noted that engaging with digital resources is important in developing staff, and by inference student, research skills:

“It helps [staff] develop teaching and research skills.”

10.2 Using and creating open educational resources

Participants referred to a range of online resources that are utilized in teaching practice, images from Flickr and TED Talks, for example.

“I use Flickr and always check for creative commons license.”

One participant spoke of OER production as part of everyday practice, enhanced by facilities in place at the institution. In this case, all teaching and learning materials are made available for open access, use and reuse via the institution’s teaching and learning repository, EdShare.

“I continually adjust and update my material and make it available.”

One participant referred to the benefits of these practices in terms of having a ‘body’ of ideas that could be referred to at any time and used in a whole range of situations. This participant referred to open educational practice as an exchange with other generators of knowledge, a process of reciprocation.

“Everything [teaching materials] goes up there ... I forget about it but then I may post a search and [discover an older upload] can solve a problem.”

“I give away material as it mirrors the way I collate and make it ... the rewards come from my materials being visible and transferable.”

10.3 Impacts on teaching and the student experience

Participants spoke of the impacts of new technologies and the online ecology generally, and open educational resources specifically, on teaching and learning practices in art, design and media.

Some responses reflected suspicions about the quality, authenticity and educational validity of certain online repositories and of multimedia resources themselves.

“I make resources myself for lectures but I prefer to go to the source – text – rather than going to YouTube.”

“It’s students who tend to go to YouTube.”

One participant perceived student concerns about using online resources:

“Students can be concerned about authenticity online.”

However, another participant suggested that helping students to navigate the online environment and critically assess information is an important part of higher education:

“Being critical of value – authenticity – is what we are teaching our students.”

Further, concerns were raised about the impact of open educational practice on existing teaching and learning practices in art and design. For example, one participant suggested pedagogic reasons for controlling the flow of information accessible to students:

“I think there could be problems of students becoming confused with all content visible – 1st year’s seeing 3rd year materials.”

Another concern was the interpretation of resources when unaccompanied by contextual information provided by the tutor. It was suggested that the provision of contextual information; how the resource has been and could be used would militate against ‘misinterpretation’ and provides a context for audiences making judgments about its value.

“Misinterpretation ... there needs to be clarity of resource, context and guidance.”

The ‘Studio’ environment and practices are presented, by some participants, as ideal conditions for collaborative working and interaction in art and design education. Open Educational practice is perceived as challenging this way of working and, implicitly, as related to individualistic approaches to learning.

“Studio offers the experience, and feedback ... the opportunity for collaboration and interaction.”



Practising Open Education - Developing the Potential of Open Educational Resources in Art, Design and Media Subjects 2010-11 – FOCUS GROUP REPORT - March 2011

Participants also perceived positive impacts of open educational practice and benefits to existing and future students in terms of enriching learning experiences and assisting students making enrolment decisions respectively:

“It offers choice - it’s genuine information and gives an idea of the student experience.”

Participants referred to other ways of making resources available to students; via Twitter, staff websites and the institutional VLE, although it was acknowledged that resources placed on the VLE are not universally accessible.

“Useful use of Twitter, students can find value in a staff website.”

“I tend to use [the VLE] as an archive of resources ... but why isn’t it ‘open’ even to all our students at WSA.”

10.4 Time and Work

Participants drew a strong distinct between ‘education’ and online resources, highlighting other aspects of the teaching and learning process:

“It is important how the student handles the materials, how staff use and contextualise ... staff should [be encouraged to] see the benefits but not be forced if they are not comfortable or confident.”

It was suggested that in a changing higher education economy OERs offered value to staff and departments:

“Customised resources can be a benefit in austere times – they can be cost and time effective.”

One participant proposed incremental, consultative and careful progression with open educational practice:

“This is all new, we need to work out staff’s place in this.”

11. Institutional Context – Profile, marketing and strategic support

“Rewards and recognition ... respect, a balance is needed.”

“There is a lack of, and a need for, guidance in the use of OERs.”

“It shows confidence [to make teaching resources openly available].”

11.1 Institutional Profile and Marketing

Participants believed Winchester School of Art demonstrated a level of assertiveness and belief in its staff by making OERs available. They perceived important benefits to the institution in the development open educational practice:

“The rewards for the institution are potentially huge...making available through YouTube is strengthening for the institution.”

Several participants suggested that there are marketing benefits to the institution developing links to schools and potential future students through access to OERs:

“There are real benefits [through branding] for example the School of Chemistry has a series of resources aimed at A-level students and they are branded by the university and the department.”

“Good promotion, we can see teaching materials as being part of the prospectus, we can use as an add-on.”

11.2 Quality Assurance and sustainability

The group did not discuss issues of quality assurance and sustainability of open educational resources extensively (apart from in relation to online ecologies generally).

However, one clear strategy was proposed by the group:

“We need to consider quality and importantly how to sort and rank the resources – an Amazon rating for example.”

11.3 Institutional Support

These differing views on open educational practice were accompanied by the belief that the development of such practices should be considered more systematically and strategically:

“There could be issues of the size of University of Southampton and body of content. The appropriate strategies [infrastructure] need to be built to link to the materials.”

“[We] need a more systematic approach, the relationship between staff and the institution needs to be clarified.”

Participants expressed a need for open educational practices to be situated within, and clear relationships drawn to other, institutional policies. This would necessitate the development of appropriate support, recognition and reward, and quality control mechanisms.

Practising Open Education - Developing the Potential of Open Educational Resources in Art, Design and Media Subjects 2010-11 –
FOCUS GROUP REPORT - March 2011

“Rewards and recognition ... respect, a balance is needed. We need to see it as part of research ... have a clear institutional policy.”

“There is a lack of, and a need for, guidance in the use of OERs.”

12. Ideas to consider

The following ‘ideas to consider’ are based on staff contributions to the focus group discussions. We hope that these suggestions will help to support the development of open educational practice within the department.

The suggestions are presented in the context of existing support agencies, initiatives and documentation that are available from the UK OER Programme, the ADM-OER Pilot Project and relevant websites listed below:

- **Identify and draw upon expertise and resources across the institution – in particular those developed through existing OER related initiatives EdShare, Swapbox and Look Here (VADS), and including marketing, information technology, library and legal services.**
- **Align the development of open educational practice with the departmental / institutional key strategic goals and underpinning values and philosophy.**
- **Embed the project Action Plan in the institution’s technology enhanced learning strategy.**
- **Provide staff with appropriate IP and copyright guidance on issues associated with open educational resources through library and legal services and programme support. Explore Creative Commons licenses suited to staff needs and considerations. Particular emphasis on the sharing of current staff practices to alleviate concerns about attribution and misuse of online resources.**
- **Provide opportunities for dialogue between academic and information technology staff to support art, design, & media pedagogies through appropriate online technologies.**
- **Student involvement - ensure that students are involved in the development of the OER Action plan. Existing student practices can help inform the rationale and process for developing open educational practice in the department**
- **Schedule workshops which enable the showcasing of existing open educational practices in the department.**
- **Support staff research methods with regard to online materials. Encourage staff and students in the critical engagement with online materials.**
- **Provide opportunities for staff to discuss the impact of an information rich environment on existing teacher identities and roles.**

- **Explore what types of teaching and learning resources are best suited to OER creation and use. How can art, design and media practice be effectively complimented by OERs and open educational practice?**
- **Explore the potential for the development of resources through curriculum and assessment design.**
- **Visiting and fractional staff – Involve visiting and fractional staff in the development of the OER Action Plan.**
- **Eventually, a clear OER policy statement will help sustain burgeoning open educational practice in the department / institution.**

General Information

Technical

CETIS – the JISC Innovation Support Centre for UK further and higher education on standardisation, strategic, technical and pedagogical advice: <http://blogs.cetis.ac.uk/lmc/2010/12/03/oen-2-technical-requirements/>

For advice and support on technical issues contact CETIS OER Programme Support Officer R. John Robertson at robert.robertson@strath.ac.uk

XERTE – Based at the University of Nottingham and part of the UK OER Programme the Xerte Project allows non-technical staff to quickly and easily build accessible, and interactive resources: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/xerte/>

Copyright and Intellectual Property

The guidelines, templates and other documents made available by the ADM-OER Phase 1 Project as PDFs can provide a first step (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>)

The range of support available through the JISC UK OER Programme:

Good Practice in Rights Clearance and Licensing: <http://www.web2rights.com/>

Blog: <http://www.web2rights.com/OERIPRSupport/blog/?p=54>

Licenses - Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/>



Practising Open Education - Developing the Potential of Open Educational Resources in Art, Design and Media Subjects 2010-11 –
FOCUS GROUP REPORT - March 2011

General Information

Open Educational Resources Information Kit – For information on the UK OER Programme:
<https://openeducationalresources.pbworks.com/w/page/24836480/Home>

Jorum Open –UK OER Programme Repository: <http://www.jorum.ac.uk/>

Visual Arts Data Service (VADS): <http://www.vads.ac.uk/>

Useful Documents, Information and Guidance – ADM-OER Project 2009-10

A range of outputs from the *Art Design Media-Open Educational Resources (ADM-OER) Project 2009-10* including: Intellectual Property, Copyright and Licensing Guidance; OER Depositor Agreement; OER Release Forms; Seeking Permission from Publishers Letter; OER Creation Flow Chart and a range of additional reports.

These are available to download from the ADM-HEA Subject Centre website:

<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>



Practising Open Education - Developing the Potential of Open Educational Resources in Art, Design and Media Subjects 2010-11 –
FOCUS GROUP REPORT - March 2011

Appendix A



Focus Group Questions

Introduction

1. Could you tell us who you are and what you consider your most valuable learning resource?
2. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of 'open educational resources'?

Key questions

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development defined Open Educational Resources as follows:

'...digitised materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching learning and research.'

3. Can you tell us about any OERS you have produced?
4. Can you tell us about any OERs you have used or re-used?
5. What are the benefits to getting involved in this?
 - To the institution?
 - To the department?
 - To the teaching staff?
 - To the students?
 - To the discipline?
 - Other?
6. What are the barriers to getting involved in this?
7. If you had control of the available funds to help develop OER practice in your department how would you choose to spend it?
8. Of all the aspects of open educational resources we discussed, which one is the most important to you?

Appendix B

See separate document: *Practising Open Education – Focus Group Thematic Spreadsheet*